

Timeline of Youcef Nadarkhani's Imprisonment

On October 13, 2009, Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani was arrested in Rasht, Iran for protesting a decision at his 2 sons' school that would force Islamic teachings on the children regardless of their faith. The Iranian Constitution protects freedom of religion including a parent's choice to raise their children in the faith of the family.

Pastor Nadarkhani was ordered by local police to appear before a local tribunal where police arrested and placed him in prison on the formal charge of unlawful protesting. He was soon charged with apostasy - abandoning the Islamic faith.

After one year in prison, a state court in Gilan convicted Pastor Nadarkhani of apostasy and verbally sentenced him to death. On November 13, 2010 he received the written verdict. He was to be hung to death.

Pastor Nadarkhani appealed his sentence and took his case to the Iranian Supreme Court in the city of Qom. The Supreme Court sent the case back to a lower court to investigate whether Pastor had in fact practiced Islam before he became a Christian when he was 19 years old. A panel of judges declared that Nadarkhani abandoned the faith of his ancestors by rejecting Islam and unless he recanted he would be sentenced to death. When asked to recant his faith, he refused.

On numerous occasions the Iranian regime attempted to force Pastor Nadarkhani to convert to Islam. Pastor Nadarkhani continued to refuse to recant in exchange for his life.

The plight of Pastor Nadarkhani is but one example of the Iranian regime's crackdown on religious minorities. According to the 2012 report by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, "the government of Iran continues to engage in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom." Pastor Nadarkhani is one of thousands jailed solely on the basis of their religion.

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